

STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

STANFORD MEDICAL CENTER  
PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA 94304

DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY  
*School of Medicine*

May 25, 1966

Area Code 415  
321-1200

Honorable John E. Fogarty  
House of Representatives  
House Office Building  
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Mr. Fogarty:

One month ago, as President of the American Society of Biological Chemists, I sent you a copy of a resolution adopted by our Society, on Federal Policy concerning Support of Fundamental Research. I am writing you now in my capacity as a professor and executive of the Department of Biochemistry at Stanford University and as a scientist involved since 1942 in health-related research.

I have just had an opportunity to read excerpts from the House Appropriations Committee Reports, and I cannot resist expressing my admiration and gratitude for the clarity, incisiveness and broad vision of its criticisms and recommendations.

At one point you make the comment on cost-sharing: "...it was certainly not the committee's intent to create the accountant's paradise that the (new) HEW regulations will bring into being." Let me assure you that these regulations have made it a nightmare even for the accountant and have driven me and my secretarial staff to distraction. During the past two weeks one of our grant applications was returned to us by Stanford administrators four times for revision because of changing rules and interpretations; this applies both to N. I. H. and N. S. F. procedures.

You make a powerful and eloquent case in your report for adequate support to maintain our ongoing basic research and training programs, to build needed research facilities and to promote programs which are on the verge of paying major dividends in human welfare. May I note, as emphasized in the resolution mentioned above (copy enclosed), that the principal sufferers from cut-backs in research support are the young investigators. Just as children suffer the most

CC 10, Shannon Gabriel

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when food is rationed, so do the young investigators feel the tightest pinch in the current squeeze for basic research funds. Nothing could be more damaging to the future of fundamental and applied research efforts and to the ultimate health and welfare of our nation.

One last point has to do with the promotion of research institutes to solve specific and urgent practical problems. As human beings, most scientists know first hand the importance of questions dealing with pollution, toxicology, dental disease and mental development. Unfortunately, answers are not the simple consequence of money and motivation, and there is a serious danger that preoccupation with these problems will hurt fundamental research and the ultimate source of solutions to these problems. Let me be specific: The creation of multi-million-dollar "Institutes to Cure Xitis" on university campuses have the following dangers: 1) major commitments are made to specific goals when absolutely essential facts and techniques may still be years away from being uncovered by basic research; 2) such institutes shield the investigators, their ideas and their results from competitive pressures of the periodic award of grants on the basis of scientific excellence; 3) such institutes by being multi-disciplinary usually discourage the penetrating, fundamental and "disinterested" investigations and by so doing they fail to attract the most original minds; 4) scientists usually aggregate because of their special fundamental interests. They may be called chemists, biochemists or biologists. Names are not important but a critical mass of each kind of specialty is what is usually required for a major research achievement; 5) education should not be dissociated from research and optimal environments for teaching and training are not likely to be found in program-oriented institutes; finally, whenever there is a struggle for funds, the large institute has an overwhelming advantage over a fledgling investigator. In fact, the young investigator may succumb to the temptations of security and guaranteed comforts offered by such an institute instead of facing the harsh realities of "starting in business for himself."

May I once again tell you how fortunate we Americans are to have you representing us in Congress. I wish you continued health and success.

Sincerely,



Arthur Kornberg

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Enclosure